

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 106

To express the sense of the Senate regarding English plus other languages.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 24, 1999

Mr. DOMENICI (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. HATCH, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. LUGAR, Mr. ABRAHAM, and Mr. SANTORUM) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

RESOLUTION

To express the sense of the Senate regarding English plus
other languages.

Whereas English is the most widely used language in the areas of finance, trade, technology, diplomacy, and entertainment, and is the living library of the last 100 years of scientific and technological advance;

Whereas there are more speakers of English as a second language in the world than there are native English speakers, and the large number of English language schools around the world demonstrates that English is as close as any language has been to becoming the world's common language;

Whereas Spanish exploration in the New World began in 1512 when Ponce de Leon explored the Florida penin-

sula, and included the expeditions of Francisco Coronado throughout California to Kansas and across Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma from 1540 to 1542;

Whereas in 1998 the Nation commemorated the 400th anniversary of the first Spanish Settlement of the Southwest (Ohkay Yunge at San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico) with official visits from Spain, parades, fiestas, masses, and other celebrations to emphasize the importance of the first encounters with American Indian cultures and the subsequent importance of encounters with other European cultures;

Whereas El Paso, Texas, the first gateway for Spanish explorers in the Southwest, also celebrated its Quadricentennial commemorating the 400th anniversary of the colonization expedition of Don Juan Onate in New Mexico and Texas along the Camino Real;

Whereas Hispanic culture, customs, and the Spanish language are a vital source of familial and individual strength;

Whereas the Bureau of the Census estimates that 1 in 5 Americans will be of Hispanic descent by the year 2030, and the future cultural, political, and economic strengths of this country are clearly dependent upon our Nation's ability to harness the talents and skills of this large and growing segment of the American population;

Whereas one of the common bonds of Hispanic people is the Spanish language, and promoting the use of Spanish at home and in cultural affairs will benefit not only the growing Hispanic population of the United States but also the economic interests of the entire Nation;

Whereas English is the common language of the United States, is important to American life and individual success, and 94 percent of United States residents speak English according to the 1990 decennial census;

Whereas immigrants to the United States have powerful incentives to learn English in order to fully participate in American society and the Nation's economy, and 90 percent of all immigrant families become fluent in English within the second generation;

Whereas a common language promotes unity among citizens, and fosters greater communication;

Whereas there is a renaissance in cultural assertiveness around the world, noting that the more interdependent nations become economically, the more interested the nations are in preserving and sharing cultural identity;

Whereas the reality of a global economy is an ever-present international development that is fostered by international trade and the creation of regional trading blocs, such as the European Union, Mercosur, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations;

Whereas knowledge of English, Spanish, French, Italian, Russian, German, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Korean, Vietnamese, African languages, Farsi, sign language, and the many other languages of the world, enhances competitiveness and tremendous growth in world trade;

Whereas the United States is well postured for the global economy and international development with the United States' diverse population and rich heritage of languages from all around the world;

Whereas many American Indian languages are indigenous to the United States, and should be preserved, encouraged, and utilized, as the languages were used during World War II when the Navajo Code Talkers created a code that could not be broken by the Japanese or the Germans;

Whereas it is clearly in the interest of the United States to encourage educational opportunity for and the human potential of all citizens, and to take steps to realize the opportunity and potential;

Whereas a skilled labor force is crucial to the competitiveness of the Nation in today's global economy, foreign language skills are a tremendous resource to the United States, and such foreign language skill enhances American competitiveness in global markets by permitting improved communication and understanding; and

Whereas knowledge of other languages and other cultures is known to enhance the United States diplomatic efforts by fostering greater communication and understanding between nations, and can promote greater understanding between different ethnic and racial groups within the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the United States Government should
2 pursue policies that—

3 (1) support and encourage Americans to master
4 the English language plus other languages of the
5 world, with special emphasis on the growing impor-
6 tance of the Spanish language for our Nation's eco-
7 nomic and cultural relationships with Mexico, Cen-
8 tral America, and South America;

1 (2) recognize the value of the Spanish language
2 to millions of Americans of Hispanic descent, who
3 will be the Nation's largest minority by the year
4 2005, and will constitute one of every four Ameri-
5 cans by the year 2030;

6 (3) recognize the importance of English as the
7 unifying language of the United States, and the im-
8 portance of English fluency for individuals who want
9 to succeed in American society;

10 (4) recognize that command of the English lan-
11 guage is a critical component of the success and pro-
12 ductivity of our Nation's children, and should be en-
13 couraged at every age;

14 (5) recognize that a skilled labor force is crucial
15 to United States competitiveness in a global econ-
16 omy, and the ability to speak 1 or more languages
17 in addition to English is a significant skill;

18 (6) support literacy programs, including pro-
19 grams designed to teach English, as well as those
20 dedicated to helping Americans learn and maintain
21 other languages in addition to English; and

22 (7) develop our Nation's linguistic resources by
23 encouraging citizens of the United States to learn
24 and maintain Spanish, French, German, Japanese,
25 Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Italian, Korean, Viet-

- 1 nameese, Farsi, African languages, sign language,
- 2 and the many other languages of the world, in addi-
- 3 tion to English.

